

PRERELEASE SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANCE

Our current Department of Corrections screening policy for prerelease centers states that offenders who enter prerelease will be **physically and mentally capable of work**, education, or vocational training. If they are unable to work due to a disability, (i.e., a verified physical or mental handicap that prevents them from working), and/or they are eligible for Veterans Administration Benefits, SSI, SSDI, or Vocational Rehabilitation Services, they must have a realistic plan to subsidize their stay at the prerelease center.

Prerelease centers may request financial assistance from the Department for “special needs” offenders provided they submit the request in writing and receive approval before the offender enters the program. This contribution may temporarily assist disabled offenders until they are financially independent. The Department may assist eligible offenders by covering their room and board costs that they would normally be responsible to pay while in prerelease. The Department will also assist with additional needs such as the cost of medications, mental health counseling, sex offender counseling, medical visits, and release expenses.

Effective July 1, 2005, the Department of Corrections has allocated to pay private prerelease contractors in Billings, Butte, Helena, Great Falls, and Missoula, a share of \$50,000 per fiscal year, to be distributed on a first come first serve basis, to pay for expenses related to necessary services provided to offenders qualifying as “special needs” offenders. As you can see from the attached example documents for special needs “Male Offender A” and Female Offender B,” the centers must request special needs assistance in writing. If approved, they are required to submit monthly reports outlining the offender’s progress. These cases require intensive case management on the part of prerelease staff, and a thorough knowledge of available community resources.